

[Price War in the Bronx Slave Market]

Beliefs and Customs - Folk Stuff 7

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 W. 130th St. New York

DATE Dec. 14, 1938

SUBJECT PRICE WAR IN THE BRONX SLAVE MART

1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview East 170th St. & Walton Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
3. Name and address of informant (See previous story 12/6/ - 14 "Bronx Slave Market")
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 W. 130th St. New York

DATE Dec. 14, 1938

SUBJECT PRICE WAR IN THE BRONX SLAVE MART

Upon hearing rumors of a price war in the Bronx slave mart, I decided again to make a survey of them. Having been informed that the one located at 170th Street and Walton Avenue was one of the swankiest of these degrading . thing things. I wended my way to this location.

This was a nasty, hazy, morning and a sticky rain padded the gritty New York side-walks. As I made my way to my destination it was with firm suspicion that the corners would be deserted on such a morning as this.

When I reached ny destination, I found that I was very very, wrong because "the sisters of the market" were standing in the corner store door way and also blocked the door of the next building. They carried their working paraphernalia in their shopping bags, little grips, brown paper bags, and news papers.

Some of them peered out of the door ways, shifting from foot to foot and humming as they watched and waited. As a whole, these women were better dressed and warmer clad than the ladies at 167 Street and Gerard Avenue.

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I moved in trying to force conversation with the women, and 2 got exactly no where, because there women [weretight?] lipped and viewed me with distrust and answered in mon-syllabic "Yesses and No's".

"I tried a new method of opening the conversation by saying, "I don't see as many young girls around here as I did on the other corner."

"What co'ner?" asked a balloon like lady in a tight brown coat.

"One hundred sixty seventh and Gerard," I answered.

"You come from dere?" she asked belligerently.

"Yes at least I was there last week."

"Well ain' no use you "cheapies" comin' f'um 'roun' dere an' tryin' to mek' business bad 'roun' head fo' us," she grumbled evilly rolling her eyes at me. "We run many a one' way f'um heah."

The mumbling undertone which her fellow watchers gave vent to "seconded [themotion?]" on her none too veiled threat.

"Oh - I wouldn't do a thing like that," I assured them firmly.

"Doan' know, you may be lak dem Father Divine people," she jerked a thumb in the direction of some women who were in a door way across the street.

"What did they do?" I asked feigning nonchalance.

"Dey do everything 'rong" answered the large brown coated one. "Comin' 'roun' heah soutin' "peace sister" an wukkin' fo' nuthin'. "dere was a time w'en we got good prices on

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dis co'ner; but den dey come. Dey take fifteen, twen'y an even as low as ten cent an hour. Ontil dey come nobody never tu'k less dan [twen'yfive?] cent an hour fo' days wu'k."

"But they aren't on your corner, now," I coaxed, seeking still more information.

"Oh, me an anudder girl beat two of dem up so, one day, 'til[,?] dey uz nigh senseless. So now dey doan' come on dis pa'tiek'ler co'er no mo!"

"What did they do" I asked. She was thawing out by the minute.

"Me an' de girl wuz bein' interviewed by two fine madams who 3 looked class and high toned. Dey had 'greed to pay us fifty cents an hour fo' ten hours wu'k and we were on de way to dejob, w'en up come two of dem wenches tak'in 'bout "Peace madam does y'll want some one tuh wu'k? We'll wu'k fo' thutty cent an hour." De madams stopped and dey both got red in de face an' looked at each udder an' den say to us, "Sorry girls but we'll tek de two udder girls." We wuz fit to be tied w'en de girl wid me say, "Ah'll wu'k fo' thutty cent' an' not to be out done Ah say' "Me to." W'en dem "madams" warn't lookin' we both shuck our fist at dem ol' women an' dey den went away. De nex' day we come to de co'er an' dere dey were. Widout sayin' nuthin; we jist' lit into dem an' beat dem up bad. Dey didn' lif' a han' to proteck dey se'fs. Dey jis' let us beat dem an' dey jis' pray an' pray, takin' bout "Peace, Father is wid us."

Some uh de udder girl pried us loose f'um dem an' dey went 'bout dey bus'ness. But now mo' of dem come den evah. Look at dat co'ner" she points to the old women on the other corner, who are dressed in plain old fashioned clothes. "But dey bes' not light heah."

"Do they get much work?" I asked.

"Yeah-de "cheapies" go over dere an hire dem. Dey wu'ks fo' nuthin; I get long pretty good do'. Ah 'got two reg'lar days an' mah madam be long any minute now. W'en dey want

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classy wu'kkers dey come to dis co'ner. Nobody heah wu'ks fo' less dan thutty cents an' hour if dey do, we run dem off dis con'er, understan?" she looked meaningly [atme?].

"I see," said I.

A long low, black car pulled up and the only person in it was the chauffeur. He beckened to the girl who had been talking to me.

Her face spread wider and she beamed, saying to me. "Deres, my madam's chauffeur now, honey. Ain't he a sweet thing?"

As the brown coated one minced through the rain to the car, one of the women from the opposite corner started across the street. The brown 4 coated one stopped and stood with arms akinbo, ignoring the rain. "Doan you dar' cross dat street an' think yo c'n steal dis job f'um me you low down thing. Git on back cross de street."

The woman stopped for a few seconds then turned and retraced her steps.

There is really a price war in the 170th Street and Walton Avenue mart.

I decided to walk away while there was still time.